



The Princess Turandot, amiably happy, because having failed to guess her riddles another suitor must lose his head.

THRICE-TOLD TALES

BY

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A PREFACE FOR THE TEACHER

I have endeavoured in this little book to provide for the very young student that introduction to romance and *the literature of escape* without which both he and she cannot hope to face with health and sanity the drabness of this world of every day.

In looking about for suitable material to soften the flavour of the examination text-book, both the publishers and myself were struck with the necessity of providing something in readable English form, and which at the same time should deal with matters that were not necessarily strange or foreign. We felt that the oriental story had been so long out of favour that it was more than deserving of an effort to bring it back to its rightful place in the scheme of things.

With this in mind this selection of *Thrice-Told Tales* is now placed before the reader, having their origins, as is most fitting, in the Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic tongues. The story of *The Princess of China* has undergone many transformations, and most recently in the famous opera of *Turandot*, the last work before his death

of that talented Italian composer—Puccini.

The Cobbler of Cairo suffered a similar fate in the last century; and it has ever since never failed to charm and delight Parisian audiences in the famous opera of *Marouf*, staged with all that dazzling magnificence and opulence of conception which must ever remain your true romantic's view of the East and its magic carpet.

Kunala, and *Nala and Damayanti* still await the hands of the enchanter. Whose shall be that hand? A Frenchman, or Englishman, a German, or an Italian? I wonder!

The skill of the story-teller's craft is well maintained in all the four tales we have included here, but I think that for pure statuesque beauty and classical feeling the palm must go to *Kunala*.

And now, gentle reader, go you forth and take your fill, only letting us wish you God-speed in most fitting fashion, by taking unto us, and using to our purpose, the speech of Abu Obeyd the Arabian:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! He who telleth these tales is Abu Obeyd; and he saith: When I took note and perceived that the souls of men took pleasure in hearing good tales, and that their ears were com-

forted and they made good cheer in the listening, then I called to mind the tales of the Agheyli Jaber and his mare, and of what befell him and his people. *For here are tales of wonderful adventure and marvellous incidents, and tales which when one hears he desires to have them ever in remembrance as a delight tasted by him and not forgotten."*

* * * * *

Since the above was written in response to the suggestions of friends *The Story of Kuna-la* has been completely re-written to bring it into line with the language of the other tales, while they in their turn have also received some modifications in accordance with the more precise needs of both teachers and students. The volume as it now stands must go farther and stand or fall on its own merits and will not fail, I think, to meet with appreciation wherever an Eastern tale is valued.

ERIC DICKINSON.

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I. THE COBBLER OF CAIRO.
FROM THE ARABIAN.

THE COBBLER OF CAIRO them. heir

Once, there was in the city of Cairo a cobbler who mended old shoes. His name was Marouf and he had a wife whose name was Fatimeh. This woman was his greatest misfortune. She was a great mischief-maker and a terrible scold. At last anxiety and misery sat so heavily upon him that he was like one intoxicated. He closed his shop and fled.

Marouf turned his back upon the city of Cairo and at last came to the city of Alexandria. There he fell in with a ship's captain and obtaining his favour took service aboard his ship. But his misfortunes were not yet ended. A grievous storm arose, and that ship was tossed upon the bosom of the ocean until it ~~might~~ ^{could} hold together no longer. One morning the dim light that struggled across the surface of the swirling ocean beheld but a single man floating upon a spar in all the waste of waters. But the sea dealt kindly with him. In a few hours he found himself washed upon the shore of a strange country. When he awoke from his slumbers he looked about him and saw that he was at the threshold of a city

that was a delight to all beholders. He entered the city's gates and excited the eyes of many, for his dress was not as theirs. ✕

There came riding a certain merchant into their midst. This good man dispersed the people from around Marouf. He then said to Marouf, "Come hither, O my brother, no harm shall befall you." He then conducted him to his house which at once was large and spacious. There Marouf was clothed in rich garments, and the merchant questioned him from whence he came. Learning that he came from Cairo the merchant grew more eager in his enquiries. Marouf spoke in particular of one Ali, who had been his class-fellow twenty years since. *Before* ✕

Upon this, the merchant said to him, "He is myself. Ali, the son of Sheikh Ahmed the druggist, and thou art my companion, O Marouf." Whereat they salaamed each other cordially. Marouf told him his sad story while the heart of the merchant Ali was filled with compassion. ✕

"Then what shall I do, O Ali?"

And the merchant Ali instructed him thus:

On the morrow he was to take a thousand pieces of gold that Ali would give him. He was then to go to the gate of the market of the merchants, riding upon a mule, a black slave walking

before him. Then he should go in among them. Soon he would behold his friend Ali who in their midst would at once salute him and kiss his hand and ask him what kind of precious stuffs he had. To all his questions he should answer but one word—*abundance!* The merchants round about them would ask questions respecting him. His friend Ali would at once praise and magnify him in their eyes, and describe him as a person of abundant wealth and generosity. If a beggar came his way he should give to him what he could easily afford, and then all would come to believe in his greatness and generosity.

On the morrow it all befell as the merchant had said. He was proclaimed in the bazar as the greatest of merchants, and that none was so generous as he.

Marouf proceeded to give to every one of the poor who passed by him until the call to noon-prayers. He then entered the mosque and prayed. What then remained of the thousand pieces of gold, there he scattered over the heads of the worshippers.

Now was the fame of Marouf spread everywhere about the city, and the merchants were amazed at the abundance of his generosity. Then Marouf went to yet another merchant, and yet

again to another. They closed not the gate of the market until he had received five thousand pieces of gold and distributed them. To all that enquired of him he gave the same reply: "Wait until my caravan of merchants arrives. If you desire stuffs, I have abundance!"

On the following day he went again to the market, obtaining money from the merchants and distributing it to the poor. This went on for twenty days, until he had received sixty thousand pieces of gold. Still there came no merchandise. Then the merchants began to murmur among themselves and brought their grievance to the merchant Ali. The merchant Ali went among the people and advised them to take their case even unto the King himself.

They went to the King and made known to him all that had happened. He listened to the story of the merchants with the greatest interest for his greed had long taken a firm hold upon his nature. He decided he must consult his Wazir in the matter. Taking him into his confidence, he said: "To crown all, O Wazir, I will contract him in marriage to my daughter so that his wealth shall be joined with mine."

But the Wazir at this grew exceedingly disturbed and tried his hardest to dissuade the king.

The King sent for Marouf, and when he came he saluted the King, who returned his salutation and seated him by his side. They entered into intimate conversation.

The king studied the face of Marouf carefully. Then from beneath his robe he drew forth a jewel of the size of a hazel-nut. This jewel had been purchased for a thousand pieces of gold; and he handed it to Marouf who took it in his hand. Marouf pressed upon it with his thumb and forefinger, whereupon it broke immediately since the jewel was frail and would not bear pressure. The King was astonished, but Marouf, looking, only laughed at him saying: "This is no jewel, this is but a piece of mineral worth a thousand pieces of gold."

The King was astonished and said to him, "What manner of jewels have you that you say such things to me?" And he answered, "I have many such jewels, each of the value of seventy thousand pieces of gold. Fear not, for I have abundance!"

At this the astonishment of the King knew no bounds, and he asked; "Then will you give me perfect jewels?" And Marouf answered, "I will give you abundance. Whatsoever you desire, I will give you abundance thereof, and I will give

you without price." So the King rejoiced and said to the merchants who were there: "Go you your ways and be patient."

The Wazir found it hard to conceal his annoyance. But the King said to him, "Treat the merchant Marouf with courtesy. Take him and hold him in conversation. Be sure that you mention to him my daughter, for assuredly I will have him marry her. Thus may I gain these riches that are in his possession."

Then the Wazir went to the merchant Marouf, and took him aside. He asked him what he thought of these matters and of marriage with the King's daughter.

When Marouf came before the King, he said: "I can bear no further delay in this matter so dear to my heart, for my treasury is full. Go, therefore, take the keys into your possession and spend as freely as you will. Clothe the poor, do all that you desire and mind not for the damsel and her female slaves. When your merchandise arrives, show your wife what generosity you will. We will have patience with you for her dowry until your merchandise arrives, and there shall never be any difference between you and me." The King then ordered the Sheikh-el-Islam to perform the ceremony of the marriage contract.

The ceremonies of Marouf's marriage ceased not for forty days, and on the one and fortieth they made procession for the bride. This was on a magnificent scale, and Marouf's generosity exceeded all bounds.

The next morning having come forth from the hammam Marouf sat at the King's right hand. Calling for the Treasurer, he bade him bring forth the robes of honour and invite all the wazirs and emirs. Long through that morning he sat, giving to every man according to his rank.

The generosity of Marouf continued for twenty days. The Treasurer was at last empty-handed. Then this man, in his extremity, went before the King in the absence of Marouf. He found the Wazir seated with the King. To them he declared that within ten days not anything of the least value would remain in the treasury. At this the King turned to the Wazir, saying: "Verily has this merchandise been backward in coming."

The King was indeed greatly troubled. X

The Wazir then proved himself a man of great resource. He advised the King that it must be through his daughter alone that they could prove Marouf an impostor and liar. So the King sent for his daughter. Thereupon the Wazir

acquainted her with their difficulty. He asked her that night to take Marouf privily and get from him the truth.

Then this lady ceased not to beguile the unsuspecting Marouf with speech sweeter than honey until she had stolen his reason. She then desired of him that he would tell her the truth.

And at last Marouf confessed all to her, keeping nothing back. ✕

She laughed, saying that his courage and consistency in imposture were colossal. She then made him acquainted with how matters stood, and that the danger was great. In the end she told him to fear not, for was he not her husband. Next she told him of a plan of which she had thought.

"Arise now," said she, "and put on the dress of a memloup. Take fifty thousand pieces of gold of my wealth. Remove yourself to a country where my father's power is nought. If my father dies I will send for you, and you may then return."

Then he rose and embraced her. He did all as she had told him, and went forth from the city at the close of night.

Marouf, troubled in mind travelled long over desert tracks, not knowing to what country he was going. At last he approached a village. He saw

a ploughman near by, ploughing with a yoke of bulls. By this time hunger grieved him sadly. He went straight up to the ploughman and begged he would give him some food. The peasant asked Marouf to wait while he went and procured some. So Marouf waited. It was not long, however, before he thought he would take a turn at the plough in his stead until he came in return for having hindered him from work. So he took hold on the plough, driving the bulls, and ploughed a few furrows. Suddenly the beasts stopped. Though he urged them on with cries they would not move an inch. Then he looked at the plough and saw that it was caught in a ring of gold. From this he removed the earth and found that the ring was in the middle of a stone of alabaster. Working upon it he at last pulled it from its place. Lo! there stood revealed a subterranean place with stairs. Descending these stairs he discovered a place like a bath, with four rooms. The first of these was filled with gold from the floor to the roof. The second was full of emeralds, pearls and coral from the floor to the roof. The third was full of diamonds and all kinds of jewels. This was not all, for at the upper end of that place was a chest of clear crystal, full of incomparable jewels, each jewel the size of a hazel-nut. Upon the chest

was a little golden box, of the size of a lemon.

When Marouf beheld this last wonder he rejoiced exceedingly. His curiosity was directed instantly to the little box. Opening it he beheld a seal-ring of gold on which were engraved names and talismans. He rubbed the ring, when, lo! a voice hailed him, saying: "At thy service! At thy service, O my master! Demand and you shall receive! Do you desire to build a town, to ruin a city, to slay a king, to dig a river, or anything of that kind? Understand, O Marouf, that I am Sultan of the Jinns, I am bound in enchantment to this seal-ring and I cannot disobey him who possesses it."

Then was Marouf amazed, and said, "Can you take forth the treasure that is here about us and place it above us on the ground so that there is nought remaining?" And he saw that this was instantly done. X

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Meanwhile the princess languished, and her state grew more and more pitiable. At last, one day, the King, her father came to her. He told her that two strangers had arrived in the capital, bringing certain news. It was impossible that her husband was yet living as he had been cut to pieces and his caravan had met with disaster.

In proof of this they had brought a token, her marriage-ring. It was not usual nor seemly that one so young and beautiful should continue in perpetual mourning. So after a suitable time it was made known that the Wazir was to wed the King's daughter.

For forty days the marriage nuptials were celebrated with every kind of feast and ceremony. On the final day, with incomparable pomp, the marriage procession moved in the direction of the city. The King, his new son-in-law, and daughter, rode elephants, surrounded by innumerable horsemen.

Suddenly, as they approached the main gate, through which the plain of El Khatan could be seen, a hush fell on the multitude. Such a sight as they now beheld no man had ever beheld in living memory. Out of the shining haze of the horizon another procession also was rapidly resolving itself, mightier and far more splendid. Men rubbed their eyes, coughed and shook themselves, believing it to be a mirage. Only the kings, daughter experienced a strange elation.

The two processions advanced to meet each other with every sign of pleasurable anticipation.

At last from the opposite procession a gigantic elephant was seen to detach itself from the main body and was urged forward with greater speed. A magnificent figure glittered in a blaze of glory on its back.

The princess was filled with a delicious joy. She had recognised in this seeming Lord of the World the handsome features of Marouf, her husband. Then the King her father advanced also to meet this princely figure.

Such was the manner of the retinue of Marouf that as he faced the King he seemed as the Emperor of the Indies. Such, indeed, the King thought him to be. In this resplendent figure he could not recognize the Marouf who, as his son-in-law, had dressed with far less magnificence. Therefore he saluted him with every mark of respect, asking what brought so exalted a person so far from his dominions.

Marouf shook with laughter and begged him to look well again. Then the King looked again and recognised Marouf. He was so astonished as to be bereft of speech. They then descended from the animals and embraced. The Wazir and the princess looked on curiously with very different anticipations.

The King explained his large company to

Marouf, saying that this was the last day, owing to the widowhood of his daughter, before the Wazir would become his son-in-law.

"Bismillah," said Marouf, "this Wazir and I have things to say that will wait no longer." And he demanded that the Wazir be brought before him. Marouf then called his giant Nubian slave.

"Here is work for you," he cried. "Despatch me this man!" The wretch was forced upon his knees, a talwar flashed, and a headless corpse fell upon the sand.

Then these two hosts mingled with one another, and with great rejoicing entered the city of Ikhtyan of El Khatan. And of the merchandise of Marouf there was *abundance*, and evermore *abundance*.

THE COBBLER OF CAIRO.

Questions.

1. What quality do you find predominant in the character of Marouf? How does it influence the story?
2. Outline your impressions of the King and the Wazir.
3. What part does the King's daughter play in the story of Marouf? Give a short account.
4. Do you think the Wazir deserved the fate that overtook him or not?
5. Retell in your own words the story of Marouf.



II. THE STORY OF KUNALA.
FROM THE INDIAN.

THE STORY OF KUNALA

Long ago, but not long enough that his memory can be forgotten lived the great and wise King Asoka. Of the wisdom that he gave to man he was fully aware, and in order that when he might perish his thought should not perish with him he set up many royal edicts in imperishable stone. Soon after, as if the Gods were pleased at his goodwill towards mankind, his wife, Padmavati, in his capital of Pataliputra, bore him a son. Informed of his son's birth the King's joy knew no bounds and his heart was filled with infinite gladness. Now he knew that the splendour of the Mauryas was at its highest. He was made to feel that because he had observed the Word set down by the divine Buddha with piety and strictness so had he been blessed with a son. Daily in his prayers he begged that his son might be the instrument whereby the law and wisdom of the Buddha should blossom and flower. For this reason he named the child Dharma Vivardhana, which interpreted means—Expansion of the Law.

At last there came a day when the babe was brought by his nurse before the King. As he gazed upon the beautiful child he was filled with rapture and exclaimed: "How lovely are the eyes of this child! They are like the lotus-blossom in full bloom."

Turning to his ministers he asked them to what they could liken the eyes of so wonderful a child. They answered with one voice that they knew of no man-child with eyes like this. After further deliberation however one with greater knowledge than the rest declared that in the Himavat, the King of Mountains, there dwelt a bird called Kunala with eyes that alone resembled those of the young prince.

Then King Asoka asked that a *kunala* be brought. Alternately he gazed long and intently at the eyes of the bird and the eyes of his son and could find no difference. Turning at last to his ministers gathered about him he said, "The Prince's eyes are indeed like those of this rare and lovely bird, I ordain therefore that the child be called Kunala." And this was done.

As time went by the child grew up under the care of his six nurses. Two had been necessary to give him the breast, two to wash him, and two to play with him.

One day, relaxing from the busy cares of his empire, the wise King Asoka visited that part of the palace-gardens where the boy was at play with his nurses. So beautiful was the sight the King for some moments could not bring himself to disturb that innocent play. Then, restraining himself no longer he emerged from the shadows into their midst. Taking the boy in his arms he studied his face with the deepest love. To the nurses waiting nearby he cried that not one of his sons was as beautiful as this one. ✕

Again time passed and the time came for the boy to be put under sterner tutors; and he was sent forth to the hermitage of Kukhta. There the sage, Yasas, Sthavira of the religious council, learned in all of the five secret sciences, beheld Kunala. Upon the sage Yasas a sense of divination descended and he prophesied, saying: "One day, ere long, Kunala will lose his eyes!"

This terrible saying was made known to the King, who greatly troubled, asked why such a dreadful thing must come to pass. Then he called Kunala commanding him to take great care of all he did and to observe strictly the instructions of the sage Yasas in all things.

When Kunala was alone with his preceptor he threw himself at his feet and said: "My Lord, what must I do? Speak, and I will obey."

The sage Yasas looked at his young charge sorrowfully:

"Be persuaded, O Kunala, that the eye is a perishable thing. Understand my son that it can be the source of a thousand evils. It is esteemed by the world as something beyond price, and because of it many men commit sins that bring them into affliction and misery."

Deeply meditating Kunala passed along the way leading to his chamber of rest, taking no heed at all of chattering roosters in the mango-clump as the sun declined, nor of the myriad hues of evening, nor of the pure white birds home-flying high in the air. His mind was filled with the words of the sage Yasas. Seated at last in the warm shadow of his little room he looked out to where the shallop-moon swung out into the midmost sea of night. Yet he did not notice her for his mind was still full of the saying of the sage, Yasas, that—perishable is the source of sight and the source of all the senses, and they cannot endure. Henceforth he cared for nought save peace and solitude. From now on he freed himself utterly from the hollow and false

world of sense to take merciful safe-shelter with the Lord Buddha only. 12 - 187

Far away in Pataliputra they celebrated the Festival of Basant. Hither and thither moved the joy-intoxicated people, wishing to their friends the pure happiness of the season; and their limbs are fresh and their garments clean.

At eventide happier grow the faces of those who abide at Pataliputra for they have been invited to attend the King's Pleasure-Garden. There the performance of a great mystery has been promised them. For many days it has been given out also that the young Prince, Kunala, has been persuaded by the request of the King, his father, to break for a moment his vows of solitude and silence. It is he who will act the part of the hero in the play about to be performed. Who more fitting than he for a hero's part whose eyes are as beautiful as those of the *Kunala*! Among those who had come to watch the play none was more interested in the chief actor than Tishya-rakshita, wife of King Asoka.

The people at last are gathered together on a spacious lawn in rows according to their rank and dignity. From high above a full-moon laughs down, while from the garden the smil-

ing flowers fling back a perfume to the night till it is mellow with their beauty, and the laughter of the children's faces and the radiance of the dark-lashed women. Whose face is loveliest of all the faces it is hard to say.

As the moon descends from her zenith so at last the drama moves to its appointed end. The people satisfied and exalted by what they have seen and the beauty of the theme slowly begin to leave the garden of King Asoka. X

It had reached an hour before dawn when Kunala long separated from his companions lingered beside the sweet flowering *Maadhabhi* bower. Even now he feels no inclination to woo his sleep. Then suddenly a gracious presence has risen before him. It takes the shape of a young and exceedingly beautiful woman.

Even as he looked at that gracious figure he was aware that this was Tishya-rakshita, the youngest and the most beautiful wife of his father, King Asoka. ✕

As she spoke Kunala's heart grew numb with a great fear.

Then before he might know what strange thing she designed he felt himself pulled to his feet.

No longer was he calm at her careless speech

and the young queen smiled to see how his bosom rose and fell in the fierceness of his agitation. But she least expected the words that now came to her across the intervening space from the lips of Kunala.

"How can you who are unto me as a mother behave frivolously forsaking your dignity in the presence of a son?"

Fierce pride now leapt within Tishya-rakshita. Soon her whole being was filled with hate.

"Since you can admonish me thus, know O foolish Kunala, that not long hence you shall cease to live, and the greenness of your youth shall descend into the earth from which it sprang."

To which the young Prince replied:

"Mother, rather would I die while persisting in my duty; I would not live a life which should deserve the censure of honest folk and the scorn and condemnation of the wise."

One look of scorn she gave him as she passed so close that her robes brushed his. Henceforth Tishya-rakshita thought of nothing but how she might destroy Kunala.

About the time of these events the City of Takshasila to the north of King Asoka's dominions became jealous of his power. King Kun-

jar-Karna, its overlord, sent a challenge to Asoka to do battle. King Asoka was for setting out immediately from his capital to quell so impudent a challenge to his authority. His ministers however advised the contrary, and were for sending Prince Kunala.

"Send the Prince," they said, "no one can resist him. He will encounter no difficulty in speedily bringing the city back to its allegiance."

Then Asoka sent for the young man. "My beloved son, it is my wish that you set out for Takshasila and do not rest until this man disputing my authority is brought low. Now go you against Takshasila and subdue it."

At once Kunala obeyed the word of his father. Putting himself at the head of the legions of King Asoka he joined battle with King Kunjar-Karna. In that battle this king was defeated and made submission to Kunala. Between the Prince and his late enemy a friendship sprang up and he begged Kunala to stay with him and rest from the fatigues of war. Kunala found pleasure in this invitation and stayed on in the city of Takshasila.

Away in Pataliputra King Asoka might not forget the beauty of his son. In memory he dwelt

on the day when he had gone out of his city some stages on the journey with him, and how on parting he had wept while gazing into the eyes of Kunala. "Happy are those eyes," he remembered saying, "and happy the mortal who may for ever behold the lotus flower of the Prince's countenance." But a Brahmin astrologer had been to the palace saying that ere long Kunala was fated to lose his sight, so that now looking into the Prince's eyes the father's heart overflowed with love. Then he had added: "Alas, this day I look into the pure radiance of eyes which shed happiness, yet of eyes it is said which are destined to perish."

The city, whither goes my beloved son, shall be happy as Heaven itself when it beholds him, but when those eyes are turned to darkness all hearts in that city shall be plunged in grief."

The days went by, and the months, without news of Kunala. One day the King fell sick of a terrible disease. Believing that his end was near King Asoka bade them send messengers without delay to bring him Prince Kunala. His heart pined for speech with the lad, and he prayed that his end might not be until they had speech one with the other. Also he was determined to place him on the throne.

Now had arrived the time of that bidding woman Tishya-rakshita. Knowing well the mind of the King she had long thought deeply on the matter; and this was the conclusion she had reached: If Kunala became King she would be ruined. It seemed to her therefore that she must proceed with great craft and cunning. One day coming into the King's presence she said: "I will undertake to cure you, but you must first forbid any doctor to enter the palace." This was done as she had requested. Then behold a miracle: within three days King Asoka was restored to health. When Asoka found that he was cured he was filled with immense joy and with praise of Tishya-rakshita. ✕.

"What boon will you ask? Ask and I will give."

Tishya-rakshita appeared to reflect deeply. At last she looked up:

"Let the King," she answered, "grant his youngest Queen full powers of ruling for seven days, and at the end the King shall resume his power."

Asoka seemed humorously struck at so original a proposition, and because he would please her he granted her request as she desired. Thus the youngest Queen of all began to rule.

Tishya-rakshita waited not a moment to set in motion her plan of revenge against Kunala. In the name of Asoka she wrote a letter to King Kunjar-Karna commanding him that he should immediately have the eyes of Kunala torn out as he had been found guilty of the greatest wickedness. She added also this: "For Asoka, a King who is strong and violent, has commanded the Lord of the inhabitants of Takshasila to tear out the eyes of this enemy who is a disgrace to the House of the Mauryas. Fail not!"

Now it so happened that whenever King Asoka issued an order that required prompt obedience he sealed it with an ivory seal. It was very necessary for Tishya-rakshita's purpose that this seal should pass into her possession without further loss of time. But the problem was how to get it. Finally she resolved that the best plan was to seal her letter with the ivory seal while the King was asleep, as it was never separated from him night or day. Without noise Tishya-rakshita stole into the King's apartments making straight for the place where she knew he nightly hid the emblem of his power. She was about to snatch away the precious seal when Asoka awoke in terror. Tishya-rakshita never for a moment lost her presence

of mind:

"What troubles the King?" she asked. And he made answer that a very grievous dream had troubled him, for he had seen two fearful vultures about to swoop and tear out the eyes of Kunala. Then Tishya-rakshita answered that he should not let that trouble him since it was nothing more than an omen for the Prince's happiness. She continued to sit beside him until again he slept. At last as she was about to make another attempt to take the seal the King awoke a second time, crying out in terror:

"O Queen," he said, "I have just dreamed the saddest dream."

"What have you dreamed?" enquired the Queen.

"I dreamed that I saw Kunala entering the city with long hair, long nails, and a long beard."

"That only means happiness to the Prince," answered the Queen.

Then Asoka fell again asleep. This time Tishya-rakshita managed to seal her letter with the ivory seal. Immediately by trusty messenger it was despatched to the town of Takshasila. Yet before day had dawned King Asoka had dreamed another dream. This time he dreamed that he beheld the teeth falling from his mouth.

As soon as ever day was come he summoned to him the wisest of his soothsayers. Turning upon them a face whose agitation might not be concealed he asked them to make known to him the riddle of his dreams.

"O King," they answered after profound deliberation, "he who dreams such dreams, who in his sleep finds that his teeth decay and fall out from his mouth, such will yet behold his son bereft of his eyes, and will hear of his death."

In consternation and dismay King Asoka rose up from his ivory throne. Facing the assembly that was gathered there and with hands clasped reverently towards the four quarters of the horizon he addressed the Divinity. With imploring accents he begged Him that He would protect his son Kunala. All that were there added their prayers to the King's; and great was that lamentation.

Meanwhile the letter of Tishya-rakshita had been safely delivered into the hands of King Kunjar-Karna. On opening it he read to his great surprise of that wicked accusation and the terrible punishment it demanded. Naturally he was moved to great anger and detestation of such a deed. He was quite certain Kunala could not be guilty of the nameless crimes at which the let-

ter hinted. There were two sides to every matter. What chance was here given to Kunala to clear himself. Already he was judged and condemned.

For many days the friendly Kunjar-Karna could not bring himself to make known to the young Prince a command so hideous and wicked. But such kind of news might not be kept secret long from the people of Takshasila. When they came to hear of it there was much murmuring, because they had rejoiced at the many virtues of the young Prince. King Kunjar-Karna reflected long, not knowing which way to turn things, this way or that. He reasoned wisely that if King Asoka could behave so pitilessly towards his son what hope was there for a people that disobeyed his commands. At last he decided that the terrible letter must be shown to Kunala. Not even a momentary weakness passed over that beautiful chiselled face of ancient Aryan heritage.

"This order must be obeyed, O King," cried Kunala, "not privily but publicly, so that all may see and know how you kept your word."

Soon a day was set aside for this momentous thing. In the great square of Takshasila a scaffolding was set up. There on the day they

brought Prince Kunala, and with him the executioners. But when the moment was arrived for them to carry out the cruel act they stood with folded hands before the young Prince while breathlessly the populace waited what might happen.

"This thing, O Prince, we dare not do," they said to him.

"Why not?" asked Kunala.

"Of what kind of madness would you make us guilty, O Prince! Only one who is mad enough to rob the moon of its brightness can tear the eyes from your countenance."

Thereat a great hush fell upon the people. But then Kunala took the ornaments, including the royal circlet, from his head, and said: "Do your duty now as a reward for this gift."

But they refused, saying such a deed would be the cause of greatest misfortune. Kunala at that knew not what next to do. Then he begged that it might be announced to the people that one from among them should come up there to him and perform the execution, for if he did not a terrible calamity would fall upon them all.

After some time there came forth a man, who was deformed and covered with eighteen spots of a repulsive colour, who offered to do that which no

one there could be found to do until that moment. Him they brought before Kunala. This man would do what the others could not do. But Kunala scarcely saw him for suddenly all the vision of his past life passed before his eyes. Prominent beyond all were those early days of peace in the far away hermitage; and one figure more than another stood before him clearly—the sage Y asas. Then Kunala was moved to address that hushed multitude. He said: “The sages who knowing the truth long ago foresaw this misfortune for me, bade me reflect that fleeting are the things of this world and varying is the lot of man. O my friends, careful of my advantage, desirous of my happiness in my youngest days, were those wise *bhiksus*. Free from all passion were they who revealed to me the sacred Law of Wisdom of the Lord Buddha. Now, when I think on the frailty of all things, when I reflect on the counsels of these my masters, I cease to tremble, my friends, at the thought of suffering. Do I not know that my eyes belong to the things which perish!”

Thus he made an end before those upturned faces. Turning to the deformed and hideous creature at his side he said:

“Come now and perform your duty. Come, take out one eye first and put it in my hand!”

Thereupon the torturer began his loathsome task. The voice of the multitude might no longer be stilled. Men lifted up their voices in lamentation, saying: "Ah! Woe! Misery! Misfortune! Lo! the moon pure in splendour falls from heaven."

When at last the executioner had torn the eye from its socket Kunala stretched forth his hand to receive it. With the sight that yet remained he looked upon it, saying: "Why, coarse sphere of flesh, do you longer behold the forms of earth? How mistaken and how guilty are those who are bound to thee and say, 'This is I.' Those who seriously reflecting, come to recognise in you an organ, elusive like a ball, pure but dependent, those alone shall be beyond the reach of misfortune."

The man now placed the other eye in the hand of the Prince. Now the murmur that rose to heaven was like the murmur of an inland sea as viewing those eyeless sockets the people made known their sorrow and grief.

Then Kunala, in whom the eyes of sense were lost, but in whom the eyes of pure understanding grew clearer still, spoke thus: "O my people, the eyes of the flesh, which elude the grasp, have been taken from me; but I have ac-

quired the perfect and irreproachable eyes of wisdom. If I am forsaken by the king, I become the son of the great-hearted King of the Law, who names me his child. If I am fallen from supreme greatness which brings with it so much vexation and grief, I have acquired the sovereignty of the Law, which destroys grief and sorrow. This, O my friends, is the first stage in the Buddhist path of Nirvana. Now go you home and my blessings go with you."

There was one faithful soul in the palace at Takshasila who had not yet knowledge of the dreadful deed that was going on that day. This was Kunala's loving wife Kanchana-mala. Now when they brought the terrible news to her she rushed from the royal palace to the place of execution. There she beheld that sightless bleeding figure, brave spectacle King Asoka had found to entertain his people of Takshasila.

"O Aryaputra, Aryaputra, what has been done to you?" Her strength might no longer support her and she swooned at the foot of the scaffold. Ready hands succoured her. Weeping bitterly she cried out to Kunala saying the loss of his eyes would mean her death. Then they brought him to her and he sought to console her with his new found wisdom. He told her how

he believed that every man receives the due measure of reward for deeds committed in this world.

"Recognising this world to be the fruit of actions, beholding creatures condemned to misfortune, knowing men to be created in order that their dear ones may be torn from them, my beloved, you ought not to weep!"

Slowly a mournful procession retraced its steps to the palace of Kunjar-karna. Fixing his sightless eyes upon his friend Kunala said sadly: "O my royal friend will you give me further leave to stay beside you until my beloved shall regain sufficient strength for the journey that must be ahead of us?"

"Stay dear Prince as long as you will for I will obey the Emperor your father no further. Already that has been done to overcast the brightness of my days for ever."

There then those two abode in the city of Takshasila gathering their strength for the yet further trials that they knew must lie ahead. After some days the Prince said, "Beloved, seeing that I am banished from my father's roof where will you go? Were it not best for you to seek refuge with your father?"

From the fullness of her heart Kanchana

mala made answer:

“O Aryaputra, what are these cruel words I hear! I am as your shadow; come what may, wherever you may go there also I go. If there is good, I am there to share it; and if there is ill, that also am I there to share.”

That same day they took leave of their kind friend Kunjar-Karna; going forth in the evening from Takshasila, not as they had come, in princely pomp, but as beggars born.

How different was that return journey to Pataliputra. No retinue was theirs, no other companionship, none of those amusing interludes arranged for the diversion of princes to lighten the tedium of their travelling. These two royal beings who had tasted of what it meant to have the slightest wish anticipated had now none to lift a finger for the granting of their simplest need. How brave was the young girl in this their supreme hour of trial! Much of the burden she took from Kunala whose delicate frame had never known a day's labour. All that he knew, that might win him the applause of men and gain a little bread perhaps, was how to play upon the *vina*. In this way therefore did they journey, Kunala receiving bread for his singing and playing, and sharing with the girl whatever he received. How

hard and toilsome was that journey. Who, in those bedraggled figures might now recognise the former royal comeliness of Kunala and his beloved wife!

At length, as the season of Spring was approaching the weary and footsore travellers arrived in the city of Pataliputra. Taking counsel with each other what might be best for them to do Kunala decided that they must try and gain access to the King his father. Yet how changed and unrecognisable he had become Kunala did not know. With a shock those simple souls found themselves shut out; and no persuasion might gain them even a foot across the threshold. All the privilege they might gain was from a guard who took compassion on their plight and gave them leave to sleep the night where were housed the chariots of the King. The night seemed endless.

At dawn, overcome with the sorrow of his plight, and sleep refusing to come to him, Kunala touched his *vina*, to ease his heart a little with song. Before ever he knew the song as it progressed became the story of his life. As he came to that part where his eyes had been quenched into eternal darkness the song grew stronger. He told how the vision of Truth had appeared to

him: how he who alone through the pure flame of knowledge beholds the eye and the other senses, is freed from the law of transmigration. Let him who desires happiness in this world but who is still tormented by the sorrows of existence, let him renounce for ever the things of sense. So the song said, and such was the song carried aloft into King Asoka's chamber as the first breath of the silver dawn stirred the lattice. Then the King heard it from where he had been sleeping; and he said joyfully:

"Surely that is a dear familiar voice I hear! Surely it must be my beloved son. Long it is since I have heard the notes of his *vina*; no one plays quite like that. The Prince has returned to his home again!"

Asoka called to one of his guards.

"Listen!" said the King, "Is not that singing the voice of Prince Kunala? Yet there has never been such sadness in that voice before, and my soul has never been so moved. I am as an elephant who having lost her young has just heard its voice. Go you now and find him out. Bring Kunala here to me!"

Then the guard went to the place where the chariots were kept. There he found Kunala, eyeless, the sweat of the road not yet removed

from him, his body still parched by sun and wind. Only a filthy beggar he saw who seemed indifferent to the world about him. The guard returned to King Asoka saying that he had found nought but a blind beggar who along with his wife had sought a night's lodging in that place where were housed the King's chariots.

Now at this news King Asoka was greatly troubled. He was at once convinced that he had found the worst realisation of the terrible dreams. He was certain now that Kunala had been bereft of his eyes.

"Go again quickly," he said to the guard, "and bring this blind beggar into my presence. There is no peace at all in my heart for thinking of the misfortune that may have befallen my son." And he wept bitterly.

Yet again the guard came to the King's chariot-house. Entering quickly he said to the blind beggar, "What are you called? Whose son are you?"

The sightless beggar turned his face to the guard and answered him thus:

"Asoka, the glory of the Mauryas, beneath whose sway the whole earth bows in obedience, that king is my father; and my name is Kunala. But to-day I am the son of Buddha, that des-

endant of the Sun Race, who established the Divine Law."

Straightway the guard took them both and led them into the presence of King Asoka.

The King received his strange guests in the chamber that looked out upon the beauty of his palace-gardens. Again Spring was come to the city of Asoka; again the air was filled with the sweet-flowering scent of the *maadhabī*, and the richening notes of birds. But the King had no mind for any of these things for he was now gazing into the face of an eyeless beggar, whose body was creased and kneaded by sun and wind, and whose garments were discoloured and unwashed. There indeed he found nothing to remind him of the glories of his son Kunala. Yet even so he would ask him; something might be learned. He then advanced to meet the dragging, halting steps of the beggar whose strength was not enough but that he must find it from the woman with him.

"Are you Kunala?" asked the King.

"Yes," answered the beggar, "I am indeed Kunala!"

At that terrible answer the King's strength suddenly went out of him, and he swooned upon the ground at the very feet of his son. Then

the King's ancient minister who was with him succoured him, and when he was recovered a little, raised and led him to a seat.

"Tell me," said Asoka, "tell me, my beloved son, how is it that you who were the glory of my kingdom, why are you bereft of the beauty of those eyes so that it seems that the heavens themselves are robbed of their splendour?"

Then it was that Kunala related to his father all the burden of that long tale. As at last he brought it to an end he said:

"Now may the Queen Tishya-rakshita, who through my suffering has been the means of securing for me such immeasurable advantages, continue long in happiness, life and power!"

The King gave an order. A great bronze gong was struck and ere its echoes were dispersed among the myriad palace-columns the Queen Tishya-rakshita stood before Asoka. Unquenchable anger shook him so that he trembled as a strong man tossed against a tempest. Bending his fierce gaze at last upon the Queen he said:

"Wherefore, O cruel woman, does not the earth open and engulf you? Before night is come, either by the sword or by the axe your head shall have been struck from your body. I renounce

you, unjust soul, I renounce you!"

Then as he gazed down into that wanton and guileful face his anger blazed to a furnace heat so that he was consumed in it.

"Why, O perfidious Queen, should your limbs not be broken into pieces? Nay, but first your eyes shall be treated as my son's. Why should you not be suspended from the gallows by your feet? Why should not your tongue be torn from its roots or your nose sliced from your face? Why should you not be made to die by slow and lingering poison and a thousand unspeakable tortures?"

Such were the perils with which Tishya-rakshita was threatened lashed by the fury of Asoka. But the King's old minister stood up just then; and this was the advice he gave:

"O King Piyadas Dhammaasoka, Protector of Dharma, and the Favourite Servant of the merciful Lord Buddha, listen but to a few words of thine oldest servant before passing sentence upon this unfortunate and wicked woman. A King should do nothing in wrath, or haste, or revenge. Remember the saying of Lord Buddha: 'Slay not; for mercy cometh to the merciful.' "

Then it was that Kunala who had so far been

a passive spectator of this painful and dreadful scene joined with his voice the plea of the old minister. Throwing himself at the feet of the King he addressed to Asoka these further words of truth:

“O King, it would be dishonourable for you to put to death Tishya-rakshita. Respect and honour, but do not slay, a woman. Kunala feels no pain, nor does the fire of wrath burn within me. In my heart there is nought but benevolence towards my mother, who commanded that my eyes be torn out. To prove to you, O King, the truth of these my words, may my eyes now straightway become as they were formerly.”

Scarcely had these words escaped the Prince's lips when in the face of Kunala his eyes appeared with all their former beauty and brilliance.

After this miracle there was for long great rejoicing, peace, and good-will throughout all the dominions of King Asoka.

To this day none may ever forget the beauty and the goodness of Kunala.

THE STORY OF KUNALA.

Questions.

1. What was the teaching of the sage Yasa and what was its effect on Kunala?
2. What is the part played by Tisbya-rakshita in the story of Kunala? Write a short account.
3. Describe what you know of King Kunjar-Karna. Contrast him with King Asoka.
4. What are the lessons we may gain from the story of Kunala?
5. Buddhism is the religion of India at the time of this story: What kind of religion does it appear to you? Write a short account.
6. What incidents do you find most appealing in the story of Kunala and why?

III. THE PRINCESS OF CHINA.
FROM THE PERSIAN.

THE PRINCESS OF CHINA

Prince Calaf was the son of a Khan of ancient family among the Nogais Tartars. The young man was ahead of all other princes in learning, bravery and spirit. He was more learned in the wisdom of Islam than the greatest scholars of his time. Such indeed were the extraordinary gifts of this young man that popular opinion had given him the titles of 'Hero of Asia!' and 'Phoenix of the Orient!'

Prince Calaf's was the mind that moved the counsels of state summoned in times of emergency by his father Timurtash. The advice of the young man always won complete agreement from the Khan's ministers who were never tired of praising his prudence and intelligence.

Again, if warlike preparations were the order of the day then might Calaf always be found at the head of his troops. Once having come up with his enemies he fought them and overcame them.

Such was the happy condition of affairs in the country of the Nogais. But Calaf was not a

young man of the kind who could ever remain content with such familiar surroundings. From time to time tales had reached his ears of other countries and other peoples. It was then he found growing in his heart a desire to adventure beyond the country of the Nogais and to learn for himself some of the marvels of which he had heard.

Therefore one day with such thoughts crowding in his mind he approached the Khan his father revealing to him intentions as shall be now related.

He told him with all of youth's *enthusiasm* how he had a desire to travel in foreign lands. Above all, he desired to see the wonderful realm of China. If he were permitted to absent himself he felt that his destiny held for him the distinction of brave acts and deeds. Also, who could tell, he might even gain the friendship of that monarch who held so vast a country as China under his rule. Earnestly he begged his father to allow him to obey the inner spirit guiding him.

"Go, my son," said Timurtash, "obey the noble resolve that animates you."

The young prince of the Nogais embraced his father, and set out for the country of Cathay.

There came a day at last when Prince Calaf

arrived at the splendid city in the neighbourhood of Pekin. He got down opposite a house which was at the gate of the city. Here there lived a little old woman who was a widow. Calaf knocked at the door when, immediately, the old lady appeared.

He saluted her and asked her courteously if she would like to receive a stranger into her house. He assured her that if she were able to give him a lodging he would see that she never had cause to complain of her guest.

The old lady looked keenly at the young man, and judged from his frank and open countenance and also from his dress that he was not a person to be treated as a vagabond. She then inclined her head to him politely and said, "Young stranger of charming countenance, my house is at your service and all that is within it."

Calaf, who felt by this time extremely hungry, enquired if she had any one whom she could send to buy him some food from the market place. The old lady answered that her little daughter of twelve who lived with her would gladly execute any commission he might give. Then the prince drew from his purse a golden piece which he placed in the child's hand and she at once set out for the market.

During this time, Calaf kept the old lady very busy satisfying his curiosity. He put her a thousand questions, asking who were the noble families of the city, and how many such families were in Pekin. At last the conversation turned on the Emperor himself.

"Be kind enough to tell me," said Calaf, "what kind of character does His Majesty possess. Is he generous, and do you think he would pay any attention or interest to a young man who could afford him service against his enemies?"

"No doubt at all," answered the old lady, "he is a very good prince, who loves his subjects as much as he is loved by them. But I am very surprised that you have not spoken to our good king, Altoun Khan, for the reputation of his goodness is well known."

"From the portrait that you give of him," answered the Prince of the Nogais, "I judge him to be of all the monarchs of the world the most happy and the most content."

"That he is not, however," replied the old lady. "Indeed I may say that he is one of the most unhappy. Firstly he has no son to succeed him when he dies in spite of all the good works that he has done. But you must understand that

this misfortune is by no means the worst." Here the old lady lowered her voice, while her eyes carefully noted the attention of the prince.

"No, young stranger, that which troubles the repose of all the Emperor's days and nights is his most remarkable daughter, the princess Turandot.

"The princess Turandot," continued the old lady, "is in her nineteenth year, and she is most beautiful. She joins to her beauty an extraordinary intellect. She has more wisdom than all the learned doctors put together. But the princess Turandot destroys all her charms by a detestable cruelty."

Meanwhile night descended, and now in the city was heard the cymbals of the justices. The prince enquired what this noise might signify.

Then the old woman told him of the daily horror that was abroad in the city of Pekin. The noise he heard was the means taken to acquaint the inhabitants that another young man was about to be put to death. The person most responsible for all this was the hateful Princess Turandot. Tonight another young man of noble parentage was to lose his life because he could not discover the proper answers to the riddles of the Princess Turandot.

The son of Timurtash had a desire to witness this execution. He left the house of his hostess, and re-entering the street met with a big crowd of people. Mixing himself with it he proceeded to the courtyard of the palace where the tragic scene was in progress.

When the mandarins had carried away the body of the young man and the man of law had also retired, Calaf remained behind in the court of the palace, his mind filled by a thousand confused thoughts.

Impatiently he waited for the day that he might feed his gaze on the beauty of the princess of China.

"What am I going to do?" he cried. "Think, Calaf, think of the fatal happening that it has brought about! Resist the impulse which enslaves you. While you retain your reason you may prevent your ruin. Yet what false reasoning inspires in me to so cowardly a prudence? If I love the princess, is not my love already written on the sky in indelible characters?"

Calaf returned. The old lady listened to her recital with the greatest attention. But at last she grew frightened and implored him in the name of God not to persist in so dreadful a resolution as he would certainly perish.

In the end, after many tearful protests Calaf affectionately took leave of the kindly old woman.

The young Prince of the Nogais, sweetly perfumed and more beautiful than the moon, went to the palace. One of the principal officers in charge of the troops stopped him and asked what business he had at the palace. "I am a foreign prince," replied the son of Timurtash, "I have come to present myself to the King, to beg leave to reply to the questions of the princess, his daughter."

The officer, at these words, looking at him with astonishment, said, "Prince, do you know that you will be sure to die? Return, and don't flatter yourself with the false hope that you may obtain the barbarous Turandot. Even if you are cleverer than a Mandarin of Science you would never be able to guess the meaning of her ambiguous words." "I thank you for your advice," replied Calaf, "but I have not come so far in order to go back." "Go then to your death," replied the officer sadly, "since it is impossible to prevent you." Whereupon he let Calaf enter the palace.

Calaf went through several halls, and at last he entered a great hall where Altoun Khan, garbed in a gold and red brocade kaftan, was gravely seated on his throne. This monarch after having

heard some of his subjects, glanced, by chance, at the Prince of the Nogais who was in amongst the crowd. It seemed to him that Calaf was a foreigner, and he saw, by his noble bearing and magnificent clothes, that he was no common man. The King called one of his mandarins, who later approached the son of Timurtash and told him that the King wished to know who he was and what he wanted.

"You can tell the king, your master," replied the young Prince, "that I am the only son of a sovereign and that I have come to try to deserve the honour of being his son-in-law."

No sooner did Altoun Khan learn Calaf's reply than he turned deadly pale. He sent everybody away, came down from his throne and approached Calaf. "Bold young man," said he. "do you know of the severity of my edict and the unfortunate fate of all those who up to now have been so obstinate in trying to obtain my daughter?" "Yes, lord," replied the son of Timurtash, "I know well the risk I run." "What madness!" exclaimed the King "Hardly has one prince lost his life when another presents himself to earn the same fate. I feel more pity for you than I do for those who have already gone to their death."

"Lord," replied Calaf, "it is very pleasing indeed for me to hear from the very lips of Your Majesty that I have the honour of finding favour in your eyes. It seems to me to be a happy omen. How do you know that I may not be able to answer her questions?" "Ah! unfortunate prince," replied the king, "those who came before you spoke in the same way, and yet they did not succeed. So Prince, withdraw, pass the rest of the day in thinking over your decision, and tomorrow come and let me know what you have resolved."

After these words, Calaf went home. The following day he returned to the palace and was announced to the king who received him in his Cabinet, as he did not desire that their conversation might be overheard.

"Well! Prince," said Altoun Khan, "what are you thinking?" "Lord," replied Calaf, "I am of the same mind as I was yesterday." Whereupon, the king beat his chest, tore the collar of his robe, and tore out part of his beard. "Alas," he exclaimed, "to have felt so much friendship for this man! The death of the others did not give me so much pain." "Ah! my son," continued he, embracing the prince with a tenderness which caused him some emotion, "surrender at least to

my grief if my reasonings cannot shake you. I feel that the blow which deprives you of life will mortally strike my heart. Renounce your resolve, I beg of you!"

Calaf was very sensitive to the feelings of the king, but he replied, "Lord, kindly let me expose myself to the peril from which you wish to save me. The greater it is, the more does it tempt me. I will even admit to you that the cruelty of the princess secretly flatters my love. I am perhaps the happy mortal who at last has come to triumph over her pride." Seeing that Calaf was so firm in his resolution Altoun Khan was extremely sad. "Ah! daring young man, it is certain that you will die in the attempt. I consent that you may undertake to reply to the questions of Turandot, but first will I do you the honour that I give to those princes who seek my alliance." Whereupon, he called the chief of his slaves, and ordered him to lead Calaf into the palace and to give him two hundred slaves for his service.

However, the king, who felt much for Calaf, sent for the cleverest, or rather the most famous professor of his royal college, and said to him, "Doctor, there is in my court a new prince who asks for my daughter. I have spared nothing in begging him to desist, but I have not succeeded.

I would wish that by your eloquence you may bring him to reason." The doctor went to see Calaf and had a very long talk with him. After which he went back to Altoun Khan, and said, "Lord, it is impossible to persuade this young prince. He desires absolutely to deserve the princess or else to die. I found him so wise that I was surprised. Well, to say to Your Majesty what I think, I believe that he is the only one who would be able to reply to the questions of the princess."

"Oh! Doctor," exclaimed the king, "your words ravish me and may it please Heaven that this prince become my son-in-law. As soon as he appeared before me, I felt an affection for him; may he be happier than the others who have perished in this town." Altoun Khan ordered public prayers and sacrifices in all the temples. Then he sent word to Calaf to make ready to reply to the questions of the princess on the morrow. Though Calaf was determined, he passed an anxious night. Sometimes he thought of his father and mother: "Alas!," said he, "if I die what will become of them?" The dawn surprised him in this confusion of sentiments, and he heard many bells ringing and a great noise of drums.

He rose and dressed himself. Just as he

finished dressing, six crimson-robed mandarins entered his room, and after having saluted him, they led him away into the presence of the king.

When the powerful monarch of China had ordered the doctors and mandarins to sit down, one of the six lords who had brought Calaf, and who was standing beside him, about fifteen cubits away from the two thrones, knelt down and read out a memorial which contained the demand of this foreign prince to the princess Turandot. Then he got up and told Calaf to make three low bows to the king, which Calaf did so well that the king could hardly refrain from smiling to show his pleasure.

Then the Calaf got up and read aloud the terrible edict which condemned to death all the bold lovers who did not reply correctly to the questions of Turandot. "Prince," said he, "you have just heard the conditions, if you so desire you may withdraw." "No, no," said the Prince of the Nogais, "the prize is too beautiful for me to be so cowardly as to desist. Beautiful princess, please ask me your questions, and I will try and guess the meaning of them."

"Well," replied Turandot, "tell me what creature is of every country, friend of all the world, and who cannot bear his likeness?"

"Madam," replied Calaf, "It is the sun."

"He is right," exclaimed all the doctors. It is the sun." "Who is the mother," asked the princess, "who after having given birth to her children, devours them all when they have grown up?" "The sea," replied the Prince of the Nogais, "because the rivers which discharge into the sea, draw their sources from it."

Turandot, seeing that the young prince replied so well to her questions, was rather annoyed so that she resolved to spare nothing to baffle him. "What is the tree," she said to him, "whose leaves are white on one side and black on the other?" Not content with asking this question, the naughty princess in order to dazzle and confound Calaf, raised her veil at the same time, and let the assembled people see all the beauty of her face, to which spite, and shame, added new charms. Her head was adorned with natural flowers placed with infinite art, and her eyes appeared more brilliant than the stars. The amorous son of Timurtash, at the sight of this incomparable princess, instead of replying to her question, remained dumb and motionless. All were seized of a mortal fear, even the king paled and thought that it was all over with the prince. But Calaf recovered from the surprise that the beauty of

Turandot had suddenly caused him.

"Charming princess, I beg of you to pardon me for having been speechless for some moments. I thought I saw one of those celestial objects which are the most beautiful ornaments of the abode which is promised to the faithful after their death. I could not see so many charms without being troubled. Please be so kind as to repeat your question, for I no longer remember it." "I asked you," said Turandot, "what is the tree whose leaves are white on one side and black on the other."

"This tree," replied Calaf, "represents the year which is composed of days and nights." This reply was much applauded. The doctors and the mandarins said that it was quite just, and greatly praised the young prince. Then Altoun Khan said to Turandot, "Now my daughter, confess yourself beaten and consent to marry your lover. The others could not reply to a single one of your questions; and he, as you see, explains them all." "He has not as yet gained the victory," replied the princess, putting on her veil again to hide her confusion and her tears. "I have other questions to ask him. But they will be for tomorrow." "Oh, no," replied the king, "I will not let you ask an infinite number of questions. All

that I can suffer is that you may ask one more immediately." The princess would not consent, saying that she had only prepared those which had just been interpreted and begged the king her father not to refuse her permission to ask the prince some more questions on the following day. "That is just what I will not grant you," angrily exclaimed the monarch of China. Since this prince has replied so well to what you asked him, I ask the whole of this assembly if it be not just that he should be your spouse?"

And now Turandot appeared to be sunk in deep affliction. Calaf, seeing this, bowed low before the king, and said, "Great King, whose justice and goodness make the vast empire of China to flourish. I ask a favour of Your Majesty. I can well see that the princess is in despair because I have had the happiness of replying to her questions. She would have far preferred, no doubt, that I may have gone to my death. Since she has such an aversion for men, may she, in spite of her word, refuse to give herself to me? I am quite willing to renounce the rights I have upon her, provided that she will reply to a question which I shall ask her." Altoun Khan was very much astonished at what Calaf had dared to ask of him.

"Very well," replied the King. "Beautiful princess," said Calaf, "what is the name of the prince who after having suffered a thousand hardships and begged his bread, now finds himself overwhelmed with joy and glory?"

The princess thought for some time and then she said, "It is impossible for me to reply to that at once, but I promise you that to-morrow I will tell you the name of this prince."

"Madam," exclaimed Calaf, "I ask for no delay and it is not just to grant you any; however, I will give you this satisfaction. I hope that after all you will be so satisfied with me that you will not put any further obstacles in my way, and will allow me to marry you." "*She will have to,*" said Altoun Khan, "if she does not reply to your question. May she not try, by falling sick or pretending to be so, to escape her lover? I would rather let her die than send away this prince. A finer man she could never meet." After these words he rose from his throne and dispersed the assembly. He went back into the inner palace with the princess, whence she withdrew into her own. As soon as the king had left, all the doctors and mandarins who had brought him took him back to the same palace whence they had taken him, while the others went away, not without

anxiety about the reply that Turandot would make.

The princess Turandot regained her palace, followed by two young slaves who were in her confidence. As soon as she had entered the apartment, she took off her veil, and throwing herself on a sofa, she gave herself up to her agitated emotions. Shame and grief were clearly depicted on her face. Her eyes, already bathed in tears, shed tears anew. She tore off the flowers which adorned her head and dishevelled her beautiful hair. Her two favourite slaves began to try and console her, but all in vain.

While the princess was in this awful state, the Prince of the Nogais, led by slaves who bore golden torches, prepared himself to taste the sweetness of sleep, though much perturbed by impatience. As soon as he entered his chamber he found a young damsel clad in a red brocade robe spangled with silver flowers, embroidered with gold and decorated with rubies and emeralds. She had beautiful curly hair adorned with artificial flowers. As for her face and figure, there was nothing more beautiful nor more perfect except the princess Turandot. Calaf was rather surprised to meet alone in the middle of the night a lady so charming in his chamber. He would not have

been able to look at her with impunity, had he not previously seen Turandot, for a lover of that princess could have eyes for no one else. As soon as she saw Calaf, she rose from the sofa on which she had been sitting and upon which she had left her veil.

She made a deep bow and said, "Prince, you may be rather astonished to find a woman here, but the importance of what I have to say to you is such that I have braved many perils to reach your chamber.

"Lord," said the lady, "Turandot, the barbarous Turandot, is plotting to have you killed.

"She hates you more than all the others, and since she cannot get rid of you otherwise than by assassination, she will have you assassinated. We tried to overcome her detestable design," continued the slave princess, "but all our words were useless, we were not able to dissuade her. She has ordered some slaves to kill you to-morrow morning."

"O! inhuman princess, perfidious Turandot," exclaimed the Prince of the Nogais. "Is it thus that you prepare to crown the tenderness of the unfortunate son of Timurtash? Does Calaf then appear to you so horrible, since you prefer to undo him by a crime which will dishonour you, rather

than link your destiny to his?"

"Lord," said the slave to him, "if the heavens thus shower misfortunes upon you, it is not in the least necessary that you may succumb under them. You are now warned of the perils which menace you.

"I also come to show you the means of avoiding it. Flee with me from this court. My slavery makes me hate it. Horses await us. Let us set off for the country of the Berlas tribe. I am related by blood to Prince Alinguer who is their king. He will be overjoyed, and he will receive you as saviour."

"We will live together within his tents, in peace and happiness. You may then look for some beautiful princess worthy of your love. Let us not waste time, and may to-morrow's sun find us far away from Pekin." Calaf replied, "Beautiful princess, I give you a thousand thanks for having wished to deliver me from this danger; but tell me, should I thus disappear, what would Altoun Khan think of me? He would believe that I had come here solely for the purpose of kidnapping you. While I would be sparing his daughter a crime, he would accuse me of having violated his hospitality. Besides, I must admit, that barbarous as the Princess of China

may be, my heart could never hate her. I adore her, I am devoted to her, and since she wishes to sacrifice me, the victim is ready."

The slave princess seeing that Calaf would rather die than go with her, began to weep.

The young prince, after her departure, spent the remainder of the night with awful thoughts. At last dawn broke, he heard the ringing of bells and the noise of drums and soon six mandarins came to lead him forth, as on the previous day, to the Throne Room. He crossed the court where there was an array of the King's soldiers, expecting at any moment to breathe his last. Far from being on his guard and thinking of defending himself, he walked like a man resolved to die. He passed through the court, however, without being attacked. All the doctors and mandarins were already assembled; Altoun Khan had not appeared as yet. The gate of the inner palace at length opened and the King accompanied by Turandot, entered the hall. They placed themselves upon their thrones and the Prince of the Nogais stood erect in front of them, at the same distance as on the previous day.

The king, thinking, that she would not be able to reply to Calaf's question, said, "My daughter, you have had enough time to think if

over. He is worthy and should reign with you after my death, over the people of China." "Lord," said Turandot, "why do you imagine that I cannot reply to his question? It is not as difficult as you think. May he ask me his question and I shall reply to it." "Madam," said the Prince of the Nogais. "What is the name of the prince who after having suffered a thousand hardships and begged his bread, now finds himself overwhelmed with joy and glory?"

"The name of this prince," replied Turandot, "is Calaf, and he is the son of Timurtash." As soon as Calaf heard his name, he paled, and fell senseless to the floor.

While he lay unconscious, the mandarins, and even the king himself, did all they could for him. After Prince Calaf had regained his senses, he said to Turandot, "Beautiful Princess, you are wrong. Instead of being overwhelmed with joy and glory, the son of Timurtash is covered with shame and burdened with grief."

"I agree," said the princess, "that at present it is as you say; but prince, instead of having recourse to vain subtleties, avow with good faith that you no longer have any claims upon Turandot. I can now repudiate you if I so wish, but instead, I wish to inform you and I do declare it

here, publicly, that I have changed my mind with regard to you."

"The friendship that the king my father has conceived for you and your own particular merits have determined me to marry you." At these words, the Hall of Audience resounded with a thousand cries of joy. The mandarins and the doctors applauded the words of the princess. The King embraced her and said, "My daughter, your resolution pleases me greatly. The aversion that you had for all men, this aversion so contrary to nature, made me despair of ever seeing born from you princes of my blood. Happily, this hatred of yours has finished its course to-day, and what overjoys me most, is that you have extinguished it in favour of a young hero who is dear to me." "But please tell us," he added, "how you came to guess the name of a prince who was unknown to you." "Lord," replied Turandot, "it was by no magic that I did it. One of my slaves went to see prince Calaf and was clever enough to discover his secret. You must pardon me for this, since I have made so bad use of it." "Oh! charming Turandot," exclaimed the Prince of the Nogais. "So, is it possible that you have for me such favourable sentiments? From what an awful abyss have

you saved me to raise me to the top of the world."

Altoun Khan then ordered the preparations of their marriage, and while these were being made ready, he sent ambassadors to the tribe of Berlas to inform the Khan of the Nogais of all that had come to pass in China and to beg him to come thither with the princess, his wife.

All the preparations having been made, the marriage took place with great pomp and splendour, and for a whole month at the court there were nothing but feasts and rejoicings, as well as in the whole of the town. The possession of Turandot did not in the least slacken the love of Calaf, and this princess, who up till then, had despised men so much, could not help but love a man so perfect.



THE PRINCESS OF CHINA.

Questions.

1. What is the chief blemish in the character of the Princess Turandot? Give a short account.
2. Retell in your own words the incident of the riddles.
3. Contrast Turandot with Damayanti in a short essay.
4. What incident do you like best in the story of Princess of China, and why?
5. What was the principal reason for Prince Calaf deserving the hand of his Princess?



IV. NALA AND DAMAYANTI
FROM THE INDIAN.



NALA AND DAMAYANTI

In the country of Nishad there reigned a King named Nala. He was a pious king, a scholar of the Vedas, a valiant chief, a skilful hunter, a daring horseman. He was handsome and strong, pure of heart and clear of mind. Among kings, he was as Indra is among the gods. One other sovereign there was such as he, King of the country of Vidarbha. He had a daughter named Damayanti, a princess celebrated as much for the sweetness as for the royal splendour of her beautiful eyes.

In tournaments and festivals the charming Damayanti was celebrated in song and story before Nala, as was the valorous Nala before Damayanti. Thus, it came to pass, that they began to think of each other, and to love each other, without ever having seen each other. Nala used to spend long hours dreaming in his gardens. One day as he was thoughtfully pacing up and down he saw alight near him a number of wild swans with golden wings one of which he seized with his hands. Then to his great astonishment the traveller of the skies spoke to him thus: "Do

not kill me, O king, for I shall serve you. Set me at liberty and I shall fly to Damayanti. I shall tell her such things that she shall most ardently desire you to be her husband."

Overjoyed at these words Nala released the beautiful swan who with his companions flew up into the sky. Nala followed them with his eyes, and like a brilliant cloud he saw them disappear in the sky towards the kingdom of Vidarbha.

Damayanti, surrounded by her companions, was walking in her gardens, midst the perfume of the flowers, when the golden swans alighted in front of her. Charmed, the young damsels sought to seize the beautiful birds, Damayanti as well as the others; but every time she sought to hold her bird, it escaped her. The swan had thus artfully drawn her apart from her companions when it suddenly spoke to her in human words: "Damayanti, please listen to me! Nala, who reigns over the country of the Nishad, has not his equal among men. You, you are the pearl of women. Your union would be happy!"

The virgin Damayanti, surprised and trembling, recognised in the bird a celestial messenger, and with joined hands and bowed head, she spoke, "Dear bird," said she, "return to Nala and speak to him as you have spoken to me."

From that day onwards she became pale and thoughtful: Nala alone occupied her thoughts.

Some time later, the king of Vidarbha, considering his daughter, thought fit that her Swayamvara should take place. Soon all the kings and princes, with their retinues were crowding towards his capital, and he received each one of them with honour, according to his rank. The gods also resolved that they would be present at the Swayamvara. Damayanti was so beautiful that even the gods were unable to resist her charms. They mounted their marvellous chariots and traversed the immensity of the skies.

They were approaching Vidarbha, when they saw a young man journeying alone. They abandoned their chariots, and descending through the clouds suddenly appeared before him. "O Nala, noblest of princes, bear a message for us!," they said to him. "I will bear it," said Nala. "But first tell me, O, beings of light, who are you and what message must I bear?"

Then one made himself their spokesman: "You see before you the celestial gods. I am Indra, King of the Skies, and here is Agni, the god of fire, Varuna, Lord of waters, and Yama, King of the dead. Go now, on our behalf, to Damayanti, and tell her that she may choose from

amongst us in the Swayamvara." Then Nala cried out, "O gods, spare me! Do not charge me with this message! How should I be able to accomplish it, I who come here for her?" "But you have promised," said the gods in chorus. "But how shall I reach her? How to enter the closely guarded domain where the princess dwells?" cried Nala. "That will be our affair," said the gods. And straightway Nala found himself transported into the presence of Damayanti and gladdened his eyes for the first time with the beauty of her of whom he had heard so much. There in her garden he found her surrounded by her maidens. Her eyes shone with the soft light of love, and her face was as the pale radiance of the moon. Admiring him in silence, Damayanti recovering her self-possession moved towards Nala.

"What is your name, O unknown prince, who appears here in the likeness of a god? How have you thus been able to reach me?"

As those sweet tones fell upon Nala's ears his love increased with his despair since he must speak for others and not himself. Yet honour must come first, so he answered: "My name is Nala and it is the power of the gods that has brought me here. It is in their name that I come

to you. Choose to-morrow as your spouse, either Indrá, or Yama, Varuna, or Agni, for one and all are consumed with love of you."

Then Damayanti bowed her head on hearing the name of the gods. Smiling a most perfect smile she said:

"Not the gods, O Nala, but you shall I choose. The swan with the golden wings spoke to me of you. To-morrow, before all, shall I choose you."

But Nala answered: "O beauteous Damayanti, bethink you what you do! Choose from among them since they desire you. It is as a friend I beg of you this boon."

The tears stood in Damayanti's eyes. With joined hands and lips that trembled, she said:

"I revere the gods, but it is you, O King, whom I shall choose. The choice belongs to me alone and none can blame you."

Then was Nala so full of joy that he scarcely felt any fear for the likely wrath of gods. Now he bowed before her, again became invisible, and straightway returned to those who had sent him.

No sooner was Nala returned than the gods surrounded him. "Well, Nala," said they, "have you seen her, the beautiful Damayanti?"

"I have seen her," said Nala. "Guided by

you, radiant beings, I reached her. Faithfully have I borne your message, but the daughter of Bhima only replied, "Come you also to the Swayamvara, and before the gods, without blame for you, shall I choose you." Such was their love for Damayanti that the next day saw many ardent chiefs spurring forward to Bhima's royal dwelling. Entering through the golden portals, they advanced, as lions descend from the mountains, into the vast uncovered space. Laden with garlands of blossoms, bearing their glittering sceptres, young long-haired princes and the proud sombre-eyed monarchs awaited Damayanti.

At last she came, and all of them, motionless and ravished, breathlessly followed with their eyes her every footstep. Before each was proclaimed their names and exploits. But she passed on without yet having chosen. When the name of Nala was called, raising her eyes to recognise the face so dear to her, she was stupefied to see before her five princes, all of them as handsome as one another, all bearing exact likenesses to him she loved. Which was Nala? How to choose? How to recognise him there among the gods who had taken on his face and figure? Hesitating, in despair, she vainly sought in her memory for the signs by which the gods are known from mor-

tals; she could distinguish none. Then in her most grievous extremity, with the greatest humility, before them she spoke thus:

"O gracious beings, in order that I may remain faithful to my vows, enable me to recognise him whom I love: O, celestial ones, it is to Nala, and Nala alone, that I have promised myself, I beg of you, O guardians of the universe, to take on again your proper shapes so that I may be able to distinguish my rightful lord from amongst you."

Thus she ended, and the gods, moved by such eloquence, sweetness, fidelity and love, granted the prayers of Damayanti.

Damayanti, full of joy, exclaimed, "I recognise thee, O my dear lord!" And she made obeisance humbly before him, seized with her left hand the hem of Nala's robe, and proudly standing up again she set about his neck her own garland of flowers. Before the whole world she had chosen him for her lord. Midst cries of joy and acclamations, Nala spoke to her tenderly thus:

"O thou who hast preferred me to the gods, blessed be thou and receive my promise, for I am thine, till death I am thine, O lovely Damayanti, thine alone."

For twelve long years did Nala and Dama-

yanti live most happily. A son and a daughter were born unto them. Their kingdom was prosperous and flourishing. But Kali, the sombre god of the shadows of death, having arrived too late at the Swayamvara, had vowed to wreak vengeance upon this rash mortal whom she had preferred to the gods. Yet Nala seemed to be invulnerable. One evening, however, while performing the prescribed ablutions he unknowingly omitted a part of them, and so was offering his prayers without having thoroughly purified himself. Seizing this opportunity Kali rushed in upon the heart of Nala and imbued him immediately with an inordinate passion to gamble. Entering the palace Nala at once called for dice and challenging his brother, played and lost, played and lost again. But the more he lost, the more the fever consumed him to try and win. In this way throughout the space of many days and weeks did he lose steadily, one by one, his jewels, his treasures, his elephants, his horses, his chariots, and even his royal robes. Month followed month, and still he gambled ceaselessly, bewitched by Kali, until he who had been surnamed the Conqueror, became at last but a miserable wretch by his own passion. Then Damayanti seeing that soon all would be lost, wished at least to save her

children. She had them taken away to her father in the kingdom of Vidarbha.

Still the terrible obsession did not leave Nala, and still he continued to lose. And at last his brother had won his kingdom from him. Then he said to him, "O Nala, there is no need to stop yet, for you have still Damayanti to stake!"

In the act of another throw Nala paused and looked at his brother in silence. Then slowly and silently he rose from his seat and went out.

Overwhelmed with shame, stripped of all he possessed, wearing but a single garment he left the city. Damayanti followed him, clad also in a single robe, pitiful in her misery. For three days and three nights, shelterless and starving, did they wander about in the country surrounding the city. At last they were compelled to set out for the deep solitude of the jungles. On the fourth day, as they were wandering along, seeking for fruits and roots, Nala saw some golden birds strutting about together on the ground. In order to capture them he threw over them his only piece of cloth. But the birds flew away. Nala was left there in the forest with nothing to hide his nakedness, his eyes downcast, despair in his heart. Turning towards Damayanti, he said, "O my blameless bride, here you behold me miserable and

naked, having lost all, I have made you lose all too. It seems some hidden curse pursues me. I am still your husband and your master, and you must listen to me. Here are paths to the south, this one leads to the city of your father. O my beloved, take this path and return home where a welcome awaits you!"

But Damayanti only tearfully answered: "How can I leave you, O my lord?" How is it possible for me to leave you here alone, starving, naked, burning with thirst, devoured with care? It is not enough that you may dream of happy days since past, let me be near you to soothe your pain. The best solace in grief and sorrow is the love of a faithful wife."

"Have I ever known it better than now, sweet wife?," said Nala.

"Then why, Nala, do you keep pointing to the path which leads to Vidarbha? I have confidence in your heart. If I abandon you, who knows what will come over your mind as a wicked god has bewitched you? Come with me to the home of my parents, for there we can still be happy."

"Miserable and wretched as I am, Damayanti, I cannot return to the city where powerful and full of glory I had been chosen by you."

They continued to wander, huddled together

under the same garment. At last they reached a shelter reserved for travellers and lay down on the bare ground to rest for the night. So tired was Damayanti that she fell asleep at once, but Nala could not sleep a wink. If he remained, Damayanti, out of her devotion would insist on sharing all his troubles. On the other hand, if he disappeared, she, protected by the gods, would surely find her way back to her father's home. Yes, he would relieve her of his presence, Yet, how to go without waking her, since there was but the single garment that covered both of them?

Then, in the dense shadows of the hut, Nala perceived a sword-blade glimmering. He seized hold of it, and with a single stroke severed the cloth in twain. He rose to his feet and taking his half, girded his loins. Gently covering Damayanti with the other half, he quickly glided out of the hut. Once outside, hesitation and conflict once more took him. Many times did he retrace his footsteps, dragged away by Kali, brought back by his love. Then a darkness again descended upon his reason sent by the demon Kali, and Nala fled into the jungles.

In the all-pervading silence that precedes the dawn, Damayanti awoke. She shivered and was

cold. Her heart was torn with anguish, for suddenly she knew she was alone. Then she began to weep most piteously.

Cry after cry she sent echoing through the forest, but always there was no reply. And all grew still as death. That silence struck madness into her heart so that she ran aimlessly about. Sometimes she fell exhausted upon the ground and wept, then she would rise again and continue her fruitless search for Nala among those menacing solitudes that were the haunts of beasts and reptiles. At times also the forest would wake to life, and from their lairs the lions sent forth their challenge. Sometimes too, wild bison and cruel beasts appeared out of the tangled undergrowth, disporting themselves at the edge of pools spangled with lotus. Amidst the gaily-coloured flowers, beneath the tangled creepers and tall rustling grasses there glided hissing serpents.

But this daughter of kings, this royal wife, fearlessly advanced ever onwards, calling upon him who had deserted her, yet pardoning him since she knew he was not himself. She felt no fear but for him. And ever the forest echoed to her tender calls. She had traversed far in this way when she met some pious hermits who welcomed her with compassion. Later she came across

a caravan of merchants.

Eventually she reached Shedi, passed through the city gates, clad only in the remnant of her own garment. She was wan with hunger and grief, covered with dust, but yet so beautiful and majestic that all who saw her could hardly refrain from admiration. Soon a large crowd gathered round her.

From the height of the royal terraces the Queen Mother had seen her. Damayanti was sent for and brought into the royal presence. Without disclosing her name she related her sad story:

"Remain with us," said the queen. "Your misfortune grieves me deeply."

And there in the kingdom of Shedi there tarried Damayanti. One day, some of the messengers who had been sent out far and wide by her father to find her, brought her back once more to be among her family. Once again she knew the sweet joy of being with her children.

* * * * *

Not long after his desertion of Damayanti, Nala suddenly beheld before him a vast forest-fire flaming amidst the trees. At the same time he heard a voice calling him, saying, "Nala, Nala, come to my help!" He leapt over the burning

bushes and right into the centre of the circle of fire. There, he beheld, coiled up, an enormous serpent, which spoke to him thus:

"For having once betrayed a holy Brahmin, I have been accursed, O Nala, and am condemned for ever more never to stir from this place unless you save me. Now I will make myself light so that you may be able to lift me with your hands and I shall for ever be your friend." The serpent became as small as one's finger and Nala bore it far away from the fire.

"Go ten paces further," said the serpent, "and at the tenth, stop."

At the tenth step the serpent bit him, and immediately Nala's appearance was changed completely. And again the serpent spoke to him:

"I have now so transformed you that none may recognise you, therefore be happy. The wicked god which is within you has been poisoned by my venom. He will perish and you will be at peace. Waste no time in bewailing your sad lot, but set off immediately for the city of Ayodhya, where reigns the King Rituparna. Present yourself to him, under the name of Vahuka, as a driver of chariots. Teach him the art of handling horses and receive in exchange knowledge of the subtle mastery he has of all games of chance. Thus, O

Nala, will you regain your kingdom and your bride. Take this magic garment, keep it hidden, and when you require it to regain your original appearance put it on, at the same time invoking my name, and so you will become Nala once again."

Nala obeyed the serpent, and taking service under Rituparna he soon became chief of the royal stables.

* * * * *

Damayanti, in her father's palace, was now once more with her two children and her revered parents: but she never ceased to mourn for her dear, beloved Nala.

There were brought together several noble Brahmins of great piety and learning, and these were charged to go far and wide to seek for news of Nala.

Damayanti instructed them carefully: "Everywhere you go, everywhere you see men gathered together, sing this song exactly as I now give it you." And this was the song she gave them:—

"Where art thou now, O my beloved
Who left me alone with the shadows and fears
Who left me alone in the gloom of the forest
To the shedding of countless tears?

Where art thou now, O my beloved.
 Hast thou not given me pain enough?
 Yet death shall come before I break faith:
 I with my pain, and sorrow, and love.
 "O, thou hero of the so proud heart,
 Wilt thou not heed my despair and dule?*"

O, if thy love still live in thee,
 Send me thy heart again to rule.

"While thus you sing these verses," added Damayanti, "take note of him who listens to you, and should some one approach you, rich or poor, noble or vile, bring back his words to me. Find out his name, find out where he dwells, but take good care that he may not know whence you come or whither you go!" It was after many moons that one at last came back to Vidarbha.

"O Queen," said the Brahmin, "I have just returned from Ayodhya, where reigns the King Rituparna, and there in the presence of his court, among other songs and poems I sang your song. As I was leaving the palace one came up to me, a driver of the royal chariot, named Vahuka. His face was ugly, his arms short, his stature altogether ungainly, but he bade me listen to a song

*Pain.

that he would sing me. With tears and sighs he sang thus:—

“However hard her fate, a faithful bride it seems
Preserves unaltered all her love within her heart.
Her soul is his who tells himself unceasing now
What wretch he was from her to part.

Without wrath, without spite, how great a love
has pardoned him,

Even that one with such abandoned soul,
He, who guilty, and with such ungratefulness
Half her very garment stole.

Could she but see him now, her eyes would fill
with ruth,

Could she but know how cruel is his pain:
Once a prince, yet lonely now, and lost to all,
And just a slave for paltry monarch’s gain.”

Damayanti wept bitterly and with the sad words of the song still in her ears went away to see her mother.

“Now, O, dear my mother, let me speak to the holy man who once recognised me at Shedi, for I feel that he will surely bring Nala back to me.”

When the Brahmin came before her she said to him:

“Go, O father, go swiftly as a bird to

Ayodhya and present yourself as a simple traveler and say to King Rituparna, 'Damayanti's Swayamvara is to be held a second time since the heroic Nala has disappeared for ever. Set out at once if you wish to be present, for to-morrow Damayanti will choose her a new husband.' "

And the Brahmin went forth and coming into the presence of King Rituparna told him just as he had been instructed. Then it was Rituparna sent immediately for his chariot-driver, Vahuka.

"Here now is a splendid chance to show your skill in driving. To-morrow at dawn, I wish to be in Vidarbha. You alone can accomplish this."

At this Nala's heart was torn with anguish. Bowing before his royal master Vahuka said, "O King, this very evening, at set of sun, you shall be within the gates of Vidarbha."

Then did Vahuka choose four of the best steeds and harnessed them in pairs. No sooner had Rituparna taken his place in the chariot than the horses bounded forward like the steeds of Indra at the sound of the voice of their driver.

Having set off late in the morning, they had passed near noon a tall tree laden with fruit when the king exclaimed: "Vahuka, I am going to show you something of my skill. Under this tree there are one thousand fallen leaves and one

hundred fruits. From those two branches there hang exactly five times ten thousand dancing leaves, and on these two small branches you would not find, on counting them, more than one thousand and ninety and five nuts."

Nala reined in his horses.

"I cannot say whether or not you are telling the truth, victorious King. I am going to count every one of the leaves and every one of the fruits one by one. While I am about it your second servant can watch over the horses."

"Nay," said the King, "We have no time to lose!"

But, Vahuka feeling that now was the opportunity which the serpent had promised him of acquiring the exact science of numbers and of gaming made answer:

"Stop here, O King, or continue without me. The road is good and you have another driver."

But at this Rituparna was in great dismay and seeking to appease him, said: "Nay, Vahuka, nobody on earth can drive as you do; you alone can take me safely to Vidarbha. Promise now that we shall be there to-morrow morning before dawn and I will grant you whatever you desire."

And Nala replied, "When I shall have counted all the fruits and leaves, then will I drive you

by the appointed hour to Vidarbha."

However, he counted only the leaves and fruits which lay on the ground. Then finding the king had made no mistake and was indeed perfect in his knowledge, he said: "Lord, give me your knowledge. I beg of you that you will teach me the secrets of numbers and gaming, and I in my turn will teach you how to handle and master the most fiery steed in creation."

And so the bargain was struck between them. Nala was taught the rudiments of this marvellous science. Because of this thing it came to pass that the spirit of shadows left him.

He now felt that he was his old self again, free and full of hope. Once again, getting into the chariot he drove the horses at full speed towards their destination. They arrived at dusk, making the city resound to the clatter of their chariot wheels. Within the women's apartments Damayanti quivered with joy on hearing this familiar noise. She seemed to hear for the first time since many years Nala entering the town. And in the royal stables the excited horses neighed as they heard that bounding chariot approaching with its magical driver.

"Is it not you Nala, you who drive like he used to do?" murmured Damayanti. "If Nala

is not restored to me, to-morrow I mount the funeral pyre. O joyously will I enter the flame."

She reached the terraces of the palace just at the moment when the chariot entered the inner courtyard. She saw descend from the chariot Rituparna and his servant and the heavy-statured driver who began to unharness the steaming, foam-flecked horses. But in no way whatsoever did he resemble Nala, and Damayanti, her heart torn with anguish, asked herself: "Who can he be?" Then she called one of her handmaids: "Friend," she said, "I am confiding in you. Go, find me this ungainly man. Speak to him gently. Try to find out who he is, and whether he may have ever known my husband. I feel a sort of joy in the midst of my pain. Go, and bring me back the truth.

Then quietly the maid returned to her mistress and gave her a faithful account of her interview with Vahuka. Whereupon Damayanti sent her back to watch Vahuka's every movement. "O observe him with great care," said she, "and don't leave him for a single instant. Note all that he does, and see to it on my behalf that he is given neither water nor fire. Then come back and tell me what you will have seen."

Soon the young maid returned.

"O Queen, this man is gifted with some magic power, for as he passes through low doors without bending they rise to let him pass. The King, your father, sent a great quantity of delicacies for Rituparna, together with vessels in which to cook them, but, according to your wish, no water and no fire. Then I beheld a marvel. The vessels that this man looked at were filled to the brim, and in his hand dried grass catches fire in the sun."

By these signs Damayanti at once recognised that these were gifts bestowed by the gods.

"Return to Vahuka," said she, "and take my children with you."

When Vahuka saw once again his son and daughter, now grown bigger and full of the grace and charm of youth, he could not help but clasp them in his loving arms and press them to his heart weeping the while. But to the maid who was observing him he said, "O woman, these children resemble my own little ones whom I lost long ago. Pardon a stranger, now your guest, and come no more near me."

After having this speech reported to her, Damayanti now felt sure that Vahuka was really Nala. Then she implored the king and queen, her parents, to give orders for the chariot-driver to

be brought into her presence, which was done.

Now at last those two stood face to face. For long they looked at one another in silence, Nala still unrecognisable, motionless and shy, Damayanti speechless and pale, clad in widow's weeds, the half of a torn veil covering her unadorned hair, and upon her forehead, a great mark made with ashes, the sign of eternal mourning. With a supreme effort at length she spoke.

"Tell me Vahuka, have you ever heard of a man of noble birth, and till then, of noble character, who once abandoned, all alone and asleep in a forest, his spotless bride? His name was Nala, King Nala."

Before the speech was ended the tears were falling fast from the beautiful eyes of Damayanti. Then Nala exclaimed:

"O my wife, O Damayanti! indeed it was no fault of mine, for the god of the shadows of Hell had seized hold upon me, and entered into me, so that I was no longer myself. Now, through long patience and long suffering I have been delivered from his oppression! But you, ah speak, for it is now your turn! Tell me, have you never heard of a pure woman who has so forgotten her lord that she now seeks another spouse? It is the

news of this Swayamvara which led me hither."

Then Damayanti, with a tender, quivering smile made answer:

"Can you believe me guilty of such a sin? I know that you had heard my message, that you had responded to it, and in order to bring you here, I have caused the King of Ayodhya to hasten hither, driven by you, as you alone are capable of such a feat. Now, behold me here at your feet, my lord! and ye, mighty and splendid gods, be my witnesses! May I no more breathe the pure air which blows over the earth. Sun, withdraw from me thy heat! And thou, pale moon, whose charm to mortals brings repose, cause me to sleep no more, if I have sinned!"

Suddenly a celestial voice was heard:

"Damayanti is faithful and maiden-pure, O Nala! Receive her upon your heart, thrice-blessed man."

And as these words were spoken, marvellous harmonies filled the air, a rain of flowers and perfumes came from the sky. Then Nala put his hand into his girdle, drew forth the magic garment, threw it over his shoulders, concentrated the force of his desire, and thus became his old self once more, resplendent with the beauty of youth. "O Nala, Nala!" cried Damayanti. He

drew her to him, clasped her to his bosom, and pressed her against his heart, where she lay her face, her joy gradually effacing the imprint of years of grief, every moment becoming more beautiful, more radiant, like to the morn which mounts above the clouds and shines at last in a pure sky. On the next day the return of Nala was celebrated with great rejoicings and pious sacrifices. The lessons which he had taken from Rituparna enabled him, in a decisive game, to win back all his wealth. He entered once again into his capital, together with Damayanti and their children, and both of them began once more a life full of love, wisdom, and glory.



NALA AND DAMAYANTI.

Questions.

1. In what way is this story chiefly distinguished from the others in the book?
2. What are the chief lessons we may gain from the story of Nala and Damayanti?
3. The beautiful is something difficult to define; in which of these stories do you find present most of the quality we call beautiful?
4. Contrast in a short essay Kunala and Kan-
chana-mala with Nala and Damayanti.
5. What incident do you find most appealing in the story of Nala and Damayanti, and why?
6. Retell in your own words the incident you like best.

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